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JOINT SUBSIDIARY PLANS DIVISION

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16 March 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. FRANK G. WISNER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
FOR POLICY COORDINATION:

Subject: Resistance Movements in Eastern Europe.

1. As indicated at the consultants' meeting of 14 March 1951, I am increasingly disturbed because of the difficulties in establishing networks of indigenous personnel in Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain, and believe that I should clarify and extend my viewpoint. It may well be that the difficulties are insurmountable within any reasonable period of time, yet the evidences of discontent and unhappiness among the populations of those countries, including Russia after thirty-odd years of bolshevism, are so impressive that it would be a bitter thing to reach that conclusion. I am inclined to believe that a fundamental step in examining the problem is to take another look at our accepted philosophy regarding Resistance movements with a view to determining whether the discouraging time elements may not result from that philosophy rather than from the problem itself.

2. As you know, the greatest element of urgency derives from the real possibility of global war within the near future. My own views on that possibility are also well known to you. On balance, I do not believe that the Soviets will seek an early aggressive global war as a solution, but I do not exclude the possibility that this view may well be wrong. In any case, the national policy of being prepared for it if it should come is very clear and mandatory on us all. The military have a major responsibility in preparations for war, and OPC's operations and plans are subject to joint guidance from the military and from the Department of State. This in itself creates an urgency in attempting to reach a solution to the time elements of the problem, which the military should represent and press. On the other hand, State, which is responsible for political guidance, quite properly represents and presses the wisdom of adequate political solutions from a long-range viewpoint. Fortunately, there seems to be little or no compartmentation of this sort in the present consultative arrangements for OPC, and I believe that both viewpoints can be taken into consideration and possibly met. The important thing at the moment is an acceptance of the possibility of early war and an effort to reconcile maximum preparations for it with broad political considerations.

JCS and NSC review(s) completed.

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25X1 3. A convenient point of departure is the philosophy expressed in [ ] excellent paper, "Of Resistance." It points out that Resistance movements wage war for political ends, and that "those ends are not, despite all propaganda, 'Victory' or 'Liberation,' but the recovery or the gaining of political power." A distinction is made between "haves" and "have-nots," and the role of each in both passive and active resistance is discussed. The statement is made that in case of a war with Russia, Resistance will follow the familiar pattern with respect to these two elements. In the last war, the Soviets excelled in Resistance organization and propaganda, thanks to careful preparation over many years, whereas the British, who were quite unprepared with organizations, were definitely superior in the control of supply. The fundamental lesson that he draws is that successful Resistance cannot be improvised, and he holds that the first task should be to train a relatively large cadre of liaison officers and technicians who should serve as the nucleus of our wartime Resistance organization. "They should then be sent, like the Communist agents whose counterparts they would be, to help build up Resistance movements behind the Iron Curtain." He concludes, "The vital need is to build up a powerful Resistance network behind the Iron Curtain and in the threatened areas. Exactly how that network should be used would be, of course, a matter of high policy. But in face of the challenge of the Russian 'cold war' we can only postpone its creation at our peril." OPC's philosophy seems to be accurately expressed in the foregoing. I am not sure, however, that we have really thought out the application of its political aspects.

25X1 4. [ ] paper seems to me to reflect experience acquired in non-bolshevized countries, and to be completely applicable only to such countries as are threatened by the Soviets. When we consider Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain, where bolshevism has already taken over, we are confronted with a degree of control which seems to make the distinction between "haves" and "have-nots" rather unrealistic. Entire populations can be viewed either as "haves" or as "have-nots", and, as the regime becomes consolidated, increasingly effective measures are taken to expressly prevent anyone from finding a way of life or a means of livelihood in any manner of non-conformity in peacetime. There is still a real possibility, however, that even in Russia proper and in Siberia, significant numbers of the completely dispossessed have gone outside the law and still manage to survive. The only way to really find out is to go there, and this is, of course, the function of our peacetime cadre. When it comes to actual organizing behind the Iron Curtain, the difficulties increase enormously with the degree of development of the police-controlled informer system. Again, the only way to find out is the extremely dangerous one of trying it. There seems to be general agreement that only the native-born can survive in at least the earlier missions of this sort,

and a crucial test will have been applied when we determine, first, whether or not anyone who has been in his homeland recently is actually willing to undertake such missions, and second, if we ever hear from him again in case he does accept the assignment. This sort of test is much simplified in the cases of the numerous emigre groups which claim to already have something more than potential personnel behind the Iron Curtain. [REDACTED]

5. Although the ends for which Resistance movements wage war are, as [REDACTED] says, for the recovery or the gaining of political power, and not for Victory or Liberation, it seems to me that this conception has, and perhaps wrongly, been considered by us as governing in a period like the present, which is prior to the waging of war by Resistance movements. [REDACTED] discussion refers to operations in war, and he also remarks that "when the broad alliance of which they are a part is in danger, the Resistance leaders will concentrate on military objectives to stave off the common ruin." The real point he is making is that when the overt armies are not too hard pressed, Resistance tends to leave the fighting to the overt armies and to concern itself with the political issues.

6. In bolshevized countries, the distinction between "haves" and "have-nots" not only becomes confused, but conditions tend to reach a common denominator in terms of general dissatisfaction and disillusionment, and specific dislike or fear of police state methods. The unhappy Russians I have known have seldom had much interest in either details or broad outlines of anything other than relief from interference, oppression, and the bad government of the Bolshevik party. Unlike the inhabitants of countries which have not yet been taken over by bolshevism, they are under the yoke now, and know what oppression and disillusionment are from bitter experience. They are the ones who are willing now to wage war for Liberation alone. In general, the interest in what comes after Liberation seems to be a characteristic of the emigres—those who have already been liberated. Moreover, even among the liberated, there are believed to be individuals, particularly in the professional military class, who are primarily interested in the mechanics of Liberation.

7. Our own government has generally taken a position of non-interference in the future pattern of foreign countries, and limited itself to an effort to see that positively known evils are prevented, if possible. Beyond that point we try to "influence" at most but do not apply real pressure. The trend of our policy towards a liberated Russia is consistent with this viewpoint. All that we can wisely commit ourselves to is the provision of a framework under which self-determination can be honestly achieved. Our legitimate interest is definite and specific in the Liberation as a means of weakening or

destroying the great power of a self-proclaimed enemy, and becomes rather vague and general as regards a world of law and justice as a suitable framework for our own security and prosperity.

8. I believe we are all agreed that idealistic motivation of Resistance, whether it be Liberation or political, is far more valid than mercenary motivation. There is nothing in [ ] philosophy, however, which indicates that successful Resistance is dependent on completely unified movements, or that a common political motivation must operate on everyone. The emigre groups and organizations with which we try to deal are notoriously irreconcilable, and it seems clear that it is not our real function to reconcile them. Even in China, the real issue for us between the Nationalists and the non-Nationalist anti-communists seems to be one of power rather than of social and moral issues which cause a division of power and unwillingness to provide mutual support against a common enemy. In the case of Eastern Europe, our national interests require us to get on with the vital job of building up, if possible, a powerful Resistance network behind the Iron Curtain. We must use foreigners to do this, but the fact that those foreigners cannot agree on the policies, for whose free resolution we are willing to provide a framework, should not constitute any serious barrier to our progress. The pattern of using emigres as individuals rather than as representatives of organizations, even organizing them especially for such use, which is now being worked out for Russia, may work for other areas.

9. To make a full test of the validity of any means which may come to hand does not mean that the U.S. Government as such backs those means. [ ]

The main arguments against limited support for special Eastern European groups have been that those groups would proclaim their support and so alienate other groups, and that they might engage in action behind the Iron Curtain against our friends. I should think that so long as the support was in actuality limited and spread over more than one or two groups, the true policy of the United States would be explainable and obvious even to disgruntled emigres. This could, if necessary, be done overtly, although of course secretly. [ ]

I can see no serious reason why one private U.S. group cannot give limited support to NTS while another private U.S. group gives limited support to SBONR, etc.

10. To sum up, it seems to me that OPC is on a sort of dead-center in investigating, testing, and extending resistance networks behind the Iron Curtain, and that this is largely due to a casting around for political solutions which will be acceptable to us. I suggest that, while this is being done, OPC should vigorously continue its efforts under multiple frameworks on a basis of limited support. It would appear that such limited support could be given to any group which undertakes to work against bolshevism and not to work behind the Iron Curtain against other anti-bolshevik groups, and that, until the chosen instrument appears or a united front is achieved, no political commitment should be made beyond the ultimate provision of a framework in which the political problems can be freely resolved.

/s/

L. C. STEVENS,  
Rear Admiral, USN,  
Chief.

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